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**MISSISSIPPI RIVER BRIDGE
AT MEMPHIS
PROJECT RECORDS
1939-1951**

RECORD GROUP 39

Processed by:

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SCOPE AND CONTENT

Record Group 39 is particularly noteworthy in that it is a construction record covering the conception of the project, its historic needs, the construction of the bridge and its completion. There is a vast amount of detailed plans and drawings showing the inception, changes and final working drawings of the bridge, and there are numerous photographs documenting the daily construction

To the political researcher it is a valuable group of records in that its display of co-ordinated efforts and interplay among a chartered commission (the Memphis Bridge Commission), local governments (Shelby County, Tennessee and Crittenden County, Arkansas), state governments (Tennessee and Arkansas) and the federal government (Public Roads Administration) to complete a project of the public interest. Interesting, also, is the changing role of the federal government during the period of construction from an advisory capacity to one of directed standards.

For the geologist, documentation within the group concerns the detailed topography of the Mississippi River bottom and surrounding areas (both in drawn and in written test results), as well as the weekly construction reports which give river stages, temperatures and the daily weather reports for the Memphis area and their effects upon the construction of the bridge and its completion. The detailed soil samples and tests give information about the underlying substrata of the Memphis Area and its dictation on the final design of the project.

A vast amount of correspondence deals with the "Critical Materials Shortage" (iron and steel) during the war years (1941-1946) and whether the project should be delayed or completed in the interest of national defense. It is interesting that this issue was settled shortly after the war. It should be noted that the shortages required the experimentation and ultimate usage of alternative materials as well as the adoption of engineering procedures which have since become standard in construction of this type.

Both the historical and political researchers will be interested in the declining power of the so-called "Crump Machine" in Memphis as evidenced in the documentation of this group. At the start, the Crump-dominated commission dictated most of the policy decisions of the bridge, in design, placement and construction, yet in the latter years there was a public outcry against attempts to name the bridge in honor of Mr. Crump. One letter in particular points out that "...every bird bath in the city is named in his honor, why then, name the bridge for him?..."

CONTAINER LIST

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5	Tennessee Valley Authority Correspondence	1941
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3	Preliminary planning correspondence & minutes	Jan.-July 1944
4	Preliminary planning correspondence & minutes	Aug.-Dec. 1944
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NAME INDEX

Bare, L.M.-Assistant Engineer, Tennessee Department of Highways
Beeler, Roy H.-Attorney General, Tennessee
Bohlinger, Neil-Attorney, Arkansas State Highway Commission
Brist, F.W.-U.S. Weather Bureau, Memphis
Brooks, W.T.-Engineer, Tennessee Department of Highways
Canale, D.A.-Office Manager, Tennessee Department of Highways
Crane, J.H.-Chairman, Arkansas State Highway Commission
Crumpp, E.H.-Chairman, Memphis & Arkansas Bridge Commission
Dunlap, G.G.-Engineer/Inspector, Tennessee Department of Highways
Eaton, A.G.-Director, War Production Board, Washington
Eggleston, W.-Commissioner, Tennessee Department of Highways
Erickson, L.W.-Bridge Engineer, Tennessee Department of Highways
Flannery, E.H.-Office Engineer, Federal Aid Projects, Arkansas
Fowler, W.B.-City Engineer, Memphis Commission Government
Garver, N.B.-Bridge Engineer, Arkansas State Highway Commission
Giese, J.R.-Engineer, Modjeski & Masters Consulting Engineers
Jones, R.-Division Engineer, Tennessee Department of Highways, Jackson, TN.
MacDonald, T.H.-Commissioner, Public Roads Authority, Washington
Masters, F.M.-Bridge Designer, Modjeski & Masters, Harrisburg, Pa.
Means, L.N.-Office Engineer, Tennessee Department of Highways
Miller, Lt. Col. C.W.-District Engineer, Corps of Engineers, Memphis
Mitchell, W.W.-Director/Chief Engineer, Arkansas Highway Commission
Moreland, J.E.-Highway Engineer, Tennessee Valley Authority
Patton, R.S.-Engineer of Surveys & Designs, Tennessee Department of Highways & Public Works
Phillips, C.N.-Commissioner, Tennessee Department of Highways & Public Works
Rees, W.N.-Engineer of Surveys & Designs, Tennessee Department of Highways.
Saddler, W.H.-Chairman, Arkansas State Highway Commission
Snead, C.D.-District Engineer, Public Roads Authority, Montgomery, Ala.
Tuttle, L.S.-Assistant Commissioner, Public Roads Authority, Washington
Yeary, D.R.-Senior Resident Engineer, Tennessee Department of Highways.